

Accordingly, I am directing executive departments and agencies ("agencies") to take the following specific actions to help Americans benefit from advances in information technology:

1. The Secretary of Commerce shall work with the private sector and others to develop a national strategy for making computers and the Internet accessible to all Americans, with the goal of significantly narrowing the "digital divide."
2. The Secretary of Commerce shall continue to measure the level of connectivity of Americans to telecommunications and information tools, and report periodically on the relationship of income, education, race, gender, geography, and age to Americans' access to these tools.
3. The Secretaries of Education, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Labor, and Commerce shall:
 - (a) expand our growing network of Community Technology Centers to provide access to technology for low-income Americans; and
 - (b) encourage the development of information technology applications that would help enable low-income Americans to start and manage their own small businesses.
4. The Secretaries of Education, Labor, and Commerce shall work with the private sector to upgrade the information technology skills of America's workforce, particularly workers living in disadvantaged urban and rural communities.
5. The Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Education, and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall highlight and disseminate the lessons learned from their grant programs and educational technology initiatives, with an emphasis on underserved citizens, to increase the number of communities across the Nation that could reap the benefits of information technologies for their residents.
6. Items 1-5 of this memorandum and my July 1, 1997, and November 30, 1998, memoranda shall be conducted subject to the availability of appropriations and consistent with agencies' priorities and my budget, and to the extent permitted by law.
7. The Vice President shall continue his leadership in coordinating the United States Government's electronic commerce strategy. Further, I direct that the heads of executive departments and agencies report to the Vice President and to me on their progress in meeting the terms of this memorandum, through the Electronic Commerce Working Group (ECWG) in its annual report. To the extent that substantial new policy issues emerge, the analysis and action on those policies will be coordinated in a manner consistent with the responsibilities of the ECWG, the National Economic Council, and the Domestic Policy Council, as appropriate.

William J. Clinton

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Firefighters in Worcester

December 9, 1999

Thank you. First, to the wonderful families of our six fallen heroes, who the Vice President and I had a chance to visit with before the beginning of this service. To their colleagues in the fire department, their friends in this wonderful community. To the thousands of men and women in uniform who have come here to join the Mayor, the Governor, the Senators, the Members of Congress, the Bishop and members of the clergy; President Whitehead and members of the firefighters; especially to Chief Budd and Frank Raffa and all the grieving members of this fire department, too.

I hope you can all sense how clearly we know, in spite of our talks, that words have a poor power to alleviate the pain you feel now. But as you look around this vast hall and know that there are thousands and thousands more standing outside and other

places, we hope that by our collective presence we will speak louder than words in saying that your tragedy is ours, your men are ours, our whole country honors them and you. We grieve with you, and we will stay with you.

More than two and a half centuries ago, Benjamin Franklin wrote an essay entitled, "Brave Men at Fires." He might have written it last week. This is what he said: "Neither cold nor darkness will deter good people from hastening to the dreadful place to quench the flame. They do it not for the sake of reward or fame, but they have a reward in themselves, and they love one another."

Today we honor six brave men who found a reward in firefighting, who loved one another, six men who, in turn, richly rewarded this community. So they hastened to the dreadful place to save others. For them, there was no other way.

In the book of Isaiah, God asks, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And Isaiah says, "Here am I. Send me."

When the question again rang from the smoking skies last week, Paul Brotherton, Timothy Jackson, Jeremiah Lucey, Jay Lyons, Joseph McGuirk, and Thomas Spencer also answered with a single voice: Here am I. Send me.

They were firefighters to the core, heroes already, as we have heard, to their friends and loved ones, not to mention the people they saved through the years. For all six, being a firefighter was more than a job; it was in their blood. So when they went into that building that night, they were following their dream to serve, to save lives, and to stick together.

Like their fellow firefighters everywhere, they embodied the best of our Nation of commitment and community, of teamwork and trust, values at the core of our character; values reflected in the daily service not only of those we lost but in this awesome parade of men and women who have come from all over our country and from some countries beyond our borders to honor their comrades and console their families.

Too often, we take them for granted, our firefighters. In the days ahead, I hope every American will find an occasion to thank those in their communities who stand ready every

day to put their lives on the line when the alarm bell rings.

In the Book of Kings, we find the wonderful story of the prophet Elijah, who climbs a mountain to seek the voice of God. A wind shatters rocks in pieces, but the Bible says, the Lord is not in the wind. Then, there's an earthquake and then a fire, but God is not in the earthquake or in the fire. But then, the Scripture says, "after the fire, a still, small voice." It is that still, small voice that spoke to those six good men, that moved their souls to service and sacrifice. The still, small voice that endures through the ages, that inspires the songs and words we have all shared today, that must now carry this group of grieving families through their grief to going on.

Today we thank God for the lives our fallen firefighters lived. We hope their families can remember the good and happy times and bring some smiles through their tears. We commend their souls to God's eternal loving care, and we pray that His still, small voice will bring strength and healing to these families and to this wonderful community who loved them so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. at Worcester's Centrum Centre. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Raymond V. Mariano of Worcester; Gov. Argeo Paul Cellucci of Massachusetts; Bishop of Worcester Daniel P. Reilly; Dennis L. Budd, chief, Worcester Fire Department; Frank Raffa, president, Worcester Fire Fighters Local 1009; and Alfred K. Whitehead, general president, International Association of Fire Fighters.

Statement on Renewed Flooding in Vietnam

December 9, 1999

I was saddened to learn of renewed flooding in the central provinces of Vietnam, which were already inundated by heavy rains last month. On behalf of the American people, I extend my deepest sympathies to all those who have suffered losses and are struggling to rebuild, including the families of many Americans of Vietnamese descent.

The United States is providing emergency assistance to support flood relief efforts, just